

Getting to Know Gum Disease

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is an infection that affects the surrounding gums and bone supporting our teeth. In the early stages, the gums are red, swollen and bleed easily. This is also known as gingivitis. If the infection is not treated and gets worse, the gums and underlying bone shrinks away from the teeth. The teeth start to loosen and may even drop out. This is known as periodontitis.



What causes gum disease?

Plaque is a soft and sticky layer of bacteria that forms on teeth. The bacteria in the plaque produce toxins that causes gum redness, swelling and bleeding. When the plaque is not removed, it may harden to form tartar or calculus after some time. Calculus can build up and form on the roots of the teeth below the gum line. This worsens gum disease. A dental health professional can help to remove the calculus.






What are signs of possible gum disease?

- Bleeding from gums
- Swollen gums
- Bad breath
- Loose teeth
- Teeth appear longer with time



How is gum disease managed?

- A dentist will take a look at your teeth and gums to determine how severe your gum condition is
- Teeth with very severe gum disease will be extracted
- The remaining teeth will be cleaned with scaling to allow the gum swelling to reduce
- Several rounds of scaling will help to clean the deeper areas once the gum swelling goes down
- The gum condition will be reviewed several months later. If the gum disease is still present, the dentist will refer you to see a gum specialist for further treatment
- After treatment, the teeth usually appear much longer with large gaps between them. Patients who are concerned about the appearance may be referred to see a gum specialist for further treatment

<p>Before Scaling</p> <p>Gums are very swollen with tartar or calculus along the gumline.</p>	
<p>After initial rounds of scaling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gum swelling goes down to reveal more tartar or calculus previously hidden by swollen gums • Teeth also appear much longer 	
<p>Review visit after several rounds of scaling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gums are pink and healthy • Teeth appear much longer • Large gaps are seen between teeth 	

How can I prevent gum disease?

- Please stop smoking. If you need help, you can call QuitLine 1800 438 2000 or visit www.healthhub.sg/programmes/iqit
- If you have diabetes, please see your medical doctor to keep it well controlled
- Go for regular dental checks
- Maintain good oral hygiene:
 - Brush gently at the gum line twice a day
 - Use a floss or interdental brush to clean in between the teeth at least once a day

Information in this brochure were adapted from the following sources:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/conditions/periodontal-disease.html>
- <http://dentalhealth.org.sg/public-education/publications-leaflets/>
- <http://www.pisciottadds.com/treatment/periodontal-gum-disease>
- <https://www.quora.com/What-causes-white-swollen-gums>
- <https://theoralcarecentre.com.sg/receding-gums/>